

Maintaining Readiness

by Major General David L. Grange

During World War II, German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel demonstrated that the best form of welfare for troops is first-class training. First-class training is at the top of the quality of life (QOL) requirements list. We owe our soldiers such training regardless of the type operation we conduct or are on call to execute in support of war plans. Quality training is a prerequisite for readiness—all else follows.

On fields of battle or in other diverse missions we undertake, only the best-trained and disciplined force will prevail. Therefore, readiness is non-negotiable. A commander must maintain the best possible state of readiness for the unit's wartime mission and whatever task is at hand. Readiness to win our nation's wars and conflicts is a mandate for commanders as well as to prepare for—and execute—stability and support operations if so charged.

Band of Excellence

To remain trained within the band of excellence on the unit mission-essential task list requirements takes caring, detail-oriented, innovative, adequately resourced and determined leaders. A commander must constantly balance the QOL imperative of training with other demands on his soldiers and their families. In doing so, he must never lose sight of his responsibility to lead trained soldiers into combat.

The 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) [1st ID(M)] has supported and conducted peace support operations (PSOs) throughout the Balkans over the past several years. Maintaining readiness for combat operations has been a challenge. Figure 1 shows unit readiness both peaking and dipping below the band of excellence.

Units that drop out of the readiness band obviously require more time to regain their warfighting posture.

To sustain proficiency with all battlefield operating systems required for the combined-arms teams, or as low-density, high-demand units—for example, Military Intelligence (MI) units—or with undermanned units of any type, requires extensive recovery and training time. A drop in conventional combat capability can be minimized if training resources and opportunities are available during PSOs, key personnel remain in the unit and slots remain filled above “X” percent after returning to their home station.

Units that do not deploy also suffer training degradation because of personnel losses incurred when filling deploying unit shortages, with increased taskings that take away precious training time and as elements of the unit's combined-arms team are pulled out and deployed. The 1st ID(M) has been unable to

maintain or train a full brigade combat team (BCT) in over three years.

Individual readiness degradation depends on leaders' experience level and soldiers' retention in assigned positions. Senior leaders, officers and noncommissioned officers retain higher readiness competency levels because of years of Army training and experience. Senior Army leaders also experience a more intense degree of operations spanning the range of military operations. This experience is unquestionably critical and valuable. Most junior leaders have not experienced the full range of military operations or military schooling. On their first operation, they might have deployed immediately on a PSO without having had combined-arms training experience above platoon level.

Unit Life Cycle

Soldiers who train individually on a weapon system, and collectively as members of a crew or squad, remain better able to recover quickly during

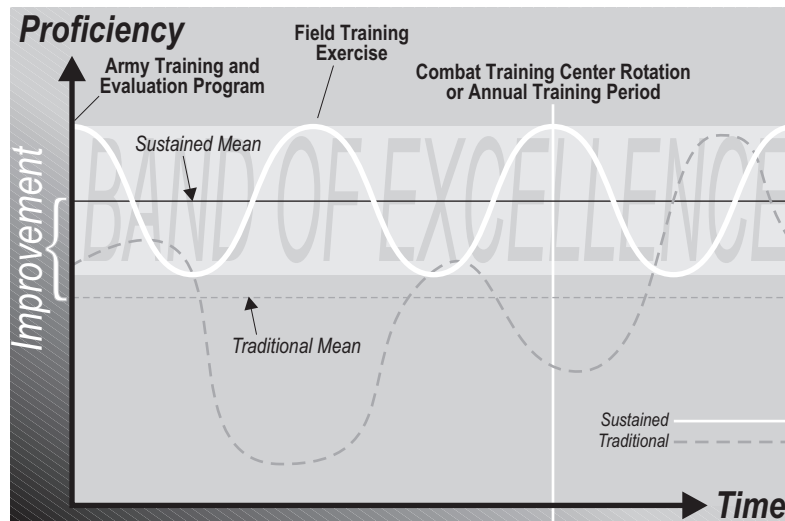


Figure 1. The Band of Excellence.

unit collective training for combat operations. Our leaders make every attempt to stabilize crews, squads and platoons as long as possible. This stability is a command interest item briefed at every unit status readiness (USR) review and quarterly training brief.

Many individual, crew, squad and platoon tasks translate readily between types of operations or across the range of operations, as Figure 2 illustrates. Versatility is a critical consideration for preoperation training and postoperation recovery training. It also relates to readiness. Many intangible factors—discipline,

wielding clubs and throwing bricks while remaining able to stabilize the situation, take care of teammates and not shoot anyone is indicative of a well-trained, versatile force.

A unit is always training for combat. When alerted for a PSO, the individual and collective combat tasks required for mission accomplishment are added to PSO-specific tasks to form a comprehensive task list for predeployment training. Soldiers and units must already be trained on many of these combat and PSO tasks and should only require a review. However, they must train for other tasks more intensely. This compre-

ducted under the most realistic and challenging conditions possible.

Training continues in-country if the deployed force is large enough that small units can rotate from PSO requirements to combat training lanes. In Bosnia, collective combat training was practical up to platoon level, to include pregunnery and live-fire training for ground units. In Macedonia, on the other hand, where Task Force *Able Sentry* (TF AS) forces are tasked to conduct peace-keeping operations (PKO), it is often practical to conduct collective combat training only up to squad level. Combat training during PSOs is only possible if:

- Conditions allow.
- Training areas are available.
- Ammunition and other training resources are moved forward.
- Units can rotate from PSO tasks to training sites.
- Force-protection conditions are met.
- Political conditions allow.

Conditions usually support the execution of some level of collective combat training. Because of possible escalation during a peace-enforcement operation, transition to combat is a constant possibility. Therefore, training and preparing for escalation remain a constant requirement.

Training opportunities and conditions are reduced during PK operations and are even scarcer for humanitarian assistance operations because of mission demands for large numbers of soldiers. Peace-enforcement operations, which require large numbers of units as opposed to individual soldiers, usually allow the most flexibility to conduct training. That training can, in turn, serve as a deterrent for observant former warring factions. There is more opportunity for individual training and small-unit collective training than for large-unit collective training.

The units were fortunate to have access to several major training areas: Glamoc Training Area (Bosnia)



Figure 2. Unit Life Cycle.

agility, unit cohesion, morale, physical and mental toughness and skilled leadership—are not included in our USR formula but are nonetheless important readiness factors required for the myriad operations conducted.

The stellar performance of our soldiers during the riots in Brcko, Bosnia-Herzegovina, under ambiguous, stressful conditions was the result of intangible factors developed through first-class training; factors that proved essential throughout the range of operations. To stand steady among angry, manipulated mobs

hensive list of tasks, which might include checkpoint operations, negotiations, coalition patrols, rules of engagement, mine awareness, joint military commissions and cultural awareness, among others, is then intensely trained to standard on situational training exercise (STX) lanes. STX lanes are followed by an intensive unit-validation exercise, which includes collective tasks such as vehicle road marches, establishing checkpoints throughout a zone of separation, cantonment area inspections and base-camp operations con-

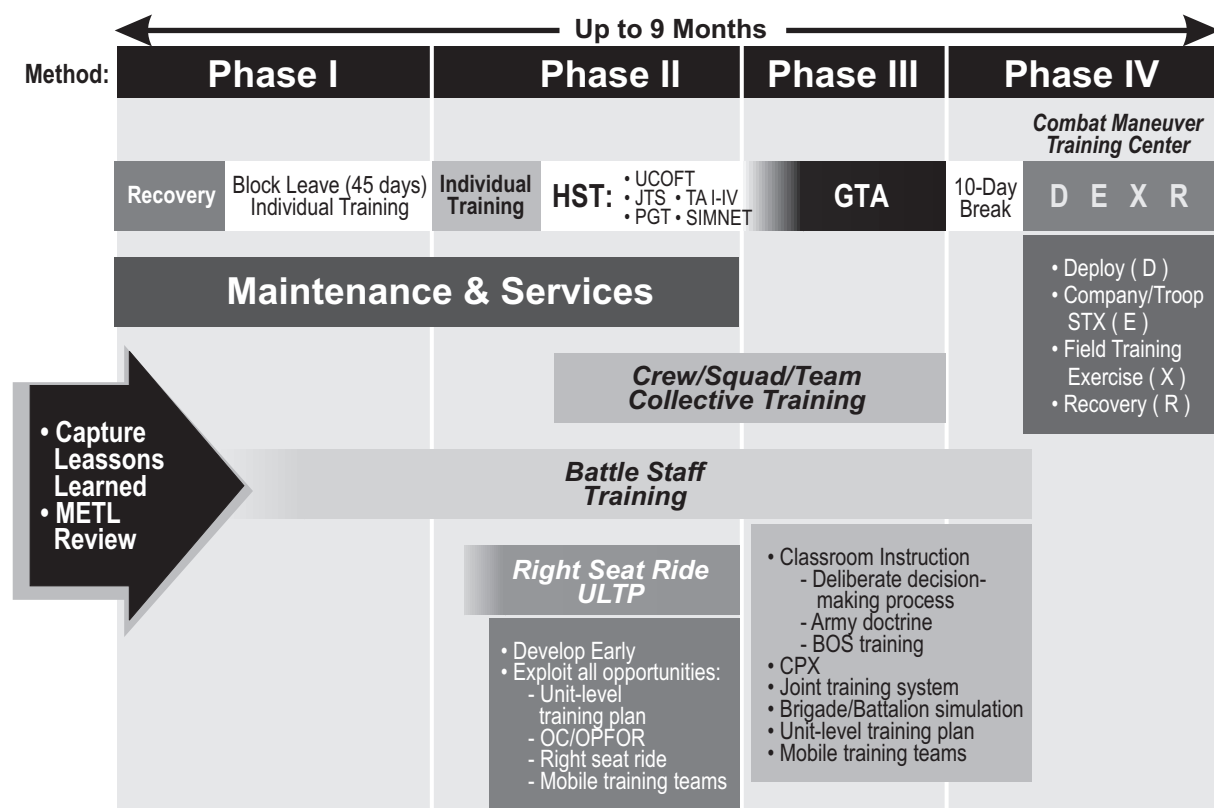


Figure 3. Reintegration Training Plan.

for attack aviation, artillery, mortars and armor, and Taborfalva Training Area (Hungary) for armor, infantry and light infantry platoons. At Taborfalva, units could conduct crew and platoon qualifications. These training areas are resource-intensive, requiring support by 7th Army Training Command (ATC), other allied units and division assets. This training was mandatory during Operation *Joint Endeavor*, because units might have had to transition to combat on a moment's notice. In addition, units were able to train at or near base camps. Individual small-arms training took place on ranges constructed near base camps, to include using ranges in Russian and Norwegian-Polish Brigade sectors.

The units periodically maneuvered artillery—"Artillery Raids," as we called them—armor and mechanized infantry platoons throughout the area of operations for show-of-force and contingency operations in support of

critical events. This maneuver provided some degree of collective training for platoon and, at times, company teams. Air assaults were also conducted to provide collective training for aviation, infantry and military police units.

Training aids, devices, simulators and simulations were used where practical to supplement training on the ground. They were very useful for training crew interaction, "switchology" and gunnery skills. Equally important was the imaginative training that unit master gunners, who took advantage of reduced-scale, locally fabricated targets, old-fashioned "worm" tracking boards and other training aids, developed. Finally, many units took advantage of routine missions, such as presence patrols, monitoring missions and weapon storage site inspections, to train combat skills, including patrolling, reconnaissance, fire-support rehearsals and cordon and search.

In Macedonia, the deployed unit

did not have its primary combat vehicles available. However, a deployed mobile conduct-of-fire trainer provided sustainment training for crews. Infantry squads trained near Camp Able Sentry and conducted squad-level live-fire exercises on Krivolak Range. The TF *AS* unit, a two-company battalion, conducted at least one battalion-level command post exercise (CPX) during its six-month deployment. This CPX was supported by 7th ATC elements from brigade headquarters providing higher command and control and the rest of the battalion TF staff flown in from the European Central Region.

Combined-arms training is most difficult to maintain at brigade and battalion levels and usually cannot occur at the company-team level. With initiative, time and resources, units can conduct fire-control exercises, CPXs, map exercises and officer professional development sessions to maintain leader and staff skills.

Reintegration Training Plan

Training opportunities are also a challenge for units that remain in the Central Region. In many cases, most of their subordinate units are deployed elsewhere, or they face extensive personnel shortages either from back-filling deployed units or from being a low priority for personnel fill, thus keeping them from training to standard. Readiness reports highlight the challenges faced by deployed and stay-behind units. Many low-density, high-demand units, such as MI units, experience extreme readiness and training challenges. Such units are required for all types of operations and, consequently, must deal with multiple, simultaneous or overlapping deployments.

On returning to the Central Region, new challenges arose as the entire BCT executed a deliberate recovery cycle, as Figure 3 shows. The recovery cycle takes several months to complete, focuses on the recovery of personnel and equipment, then on training individuals and units. The personnel and equipment recovery phase includes:

- Accountability for all weapons and equipment.
- In most cases, extensive property-book adjustments, additional maintenance not completed or resulting from the redeployment phase.
- Extended family time and block leave.
- Completing unit personnel actions, including roster updates from personnel losses and permanent changes of station.
- Completing awards, performance reports, rating schemes and finance/medical records.

After completing these tasks, units transition into intensive training.

Training Model

The division must protect units in the recovery cycle, which now places additional burdens on other units that are subsequently tasked to conduct Partnership-for-Peace and international combined military ("mil-to-mil") exercises, theater-personnel

tasking and operating force support. The returning unit trains on individual skills up through TF maneuver and/or BCT in a "crawl-walk-run" approach using the US Army Europe "Eight-Step Training Model," shown in Figure 4, to hone, refine and polish skills in which it could not remain proficient.

Training culminates with tactical evaluations from crew through TF/BCT level. Units able to train to proficiency at least up to the squad and platoon levels, and which suffer little personnel turnover, can proceed at a faster pace. The recovery model usually takes from six to nine months to complete. However, if combat is imminent, time can be compressed, depending on available resources. A unit's pending deployment dictates priority for compressed recovery.

If the division headquarters deploys, command and staff retraining is achieved through a series of CPXs, culminating in a battle command

training program warfighter exercise. Divisions should ask for this essential exercise within 120 days of returning to home station to achieve a deployable combat capability as soon as possible, which would then enable the National Command Authority to employ the division.

With only 10 divisions in the Active Army's force structure, division-level training and readiness remain critical to current war plans. Because of staff turnover and the ad hoc tactical operations centers (TOCs) employed in Bosnia and Macedonia, battalions, brigades and divisions must rebuild and recertify the functioning of battle command and TOC operations. The Division Support Command, which conducts split-based operations, must bring back together not only its forward support battalions and main support battalion to support BCTs and the division, but also re-establish a division rear CP capability. Operating on a full divisional battlefield, conducting deep operations, maneuvering combined arms and operating under and with corps units are critical tasks the division must achieve to standard for combat proficiency.

After several years of PSOs, the 1st ID(M) has finally realigned all organic units under its parent organizations. The integrity and unity of command of subordinate units must be followed as ruthlessly as a division can manage. If unit integrity is broken, the disruptive effect on all echelons of training degrades combat readiness and extends recovery time.

A tremendous lesson learned is to enforce unit and community connectivity requirements. The 1st ID(M) is currently engaged in these activities with the TF AS battalion now serving in Macedonia. The battalions that served from March 1998 to August 1999 were, and now are, located at the same base. Consequently, predeployment, employment and postdeployment requirements belong to 2d Brigade and the

Figure 4.

USAREUR 8-Step Model

Modeled on Fms 25-100 and 25-101

8. Retrain
7. Conduct AAR
6. Execute
5. Rehearse
4. Issue the Plan
3. Recon the Site
2. Train & Certify Leaders
1. Plan the Training

**ARMY
DOCTRINE
IS THE
FOUNDATION**

Training Principles

- Use performance-oriented training
- Commanders are primary trainers
- Train as a combined arms team
- Train to challenge • Train as you fight
- Use multiechelon techniques
- Sustain proficiency • Train to maintain

Schweinfurt Base Support Battalion (BSB). The same tactical command and BSB are responsible for resourcing, training, validating, deploying and sustaining units for the TF AS mission. All slice elements supporting the TF AS battalion come from that BCT. A base of resident expertise is maintained, facilitating deployment, operations, redeployment and recovery.

Building for the Future

The quality of troops and leaders in the Army today allows us to solve many readiness hurdles that, if faced in the 1970s, would have seemed insurmountable. Maintaining readiness today is a tremendous and daunting challenge with multiple PSOs, peacetime engagement activities, taskings and increasing person-

nel shortages—combined with ever-decreasing resources. If we can fill units in the way they are designed to be to perform their assigned missions, any task we receive can be accomplished while maintaining a respectable personnel tempo and QOL.

We do not want to reach our culminating point because we failed to retain or recruit the precious, high-quality force we have today. As a loyal, dedicated serving member of the Army, I am convinced that America will not let such an occurrence take place. Our nation deserves the best soldiers guarding its frontiers and interests, and those soldiers—our true combat capability—deserve the best from us. Our best is genuine *combat readiness*.

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